



## THE EFFICIENT GUNMAN; A TALE OF THE BORDER

Verses by W. O. M'GEEHAN.

Illustrations by WILL CRAWFORD.

It was down at Flo's Fandango,  
Which is just inside the line,  
Where the cowboys flock on pay day  
For their women and their wine.

There was Joe, the Greaser smuggler,  
And a shavetail from the point  
Who was more or less enamoured  
Of a lady in the joint.

There were twenty thirsty privates  
From the latest Villa chase,  
Who had slipped the provost sergeant,  
And were hiding in the place.

But the queerest in the outfit  
Was a little East Side rat  
With a college boy regalia  
And a dinky dice-box hat.

He was pale and narrow-chested  
And he seemed to cringe and shrink  
When the crowd were firing pistols  
As the signal for a drink.

They had dumped him in the desert  
From the passing Golden State;  
Said he'd come to drive an auto,  
But he wasn't talking straight.

But the queerest thing about him  
Was a small, new-fangled gun

Of the sort a girl might carry,  
Hardly bigger than a bun.

"Keerful," says the tightest private  
As he gave his belt a hitch,  
"If you ever fire that popgun,  
You'll be pinched for spreading itch."

For the border runs to cannons,  
And they like the larger bores;  
All the guests of Flo's Fandango  
Carried forty-fives and fours.

But the cocky little stranger  
With a funny little smirk  
Says, "I've used it in my business  
And I know it does the work."

Now, we'd heard of Eastern gunmen  
And of certain things they'd done,  
But we'd back our own home products,  
If this little bird was one.

Why, he looked so inefficient  
With that popgun in his fist  
And his little paper collar  
And a ticker on his wrist

That we laughed about the bantam  
And we bought him lots of drinks,  
And we got him telling whoppers  
As we passed the knowing winks.

Then the crowd from Deming gathered,  
Fighting drunk and whisky mad,  
Every man of them a killer.  
Bad men? Yes, and poison bad.

Flo, she tried to hide the stranger  
Cause she didn't want the scene  
That she seemed to know was coming,  
But that bunch was Greaser mean.

Well, they gathered round the victim  
And they started with the fun,  
Pulling jokes about his make-up,  
And they asked to see the gun.

But he took it kind of quiet  
With a shifty, nervous stare  
Till I got a queer present'ment  
It was time to get the air.

Flo, who'd seen a hundred mix-ups,  
Also seemed to get the hunch  
For I saw her tip a signal  
To the women of her bunch.

"Get that kid's frijole shooter,"  
Says the meanest cowboy then,  
"For the thing is plumb offensive  
To a lot of fighting men."

But the runt he crooked his finger  
And the little popgun popped  
And the girls and soldiers scattered  
As the biggest cowboy dropped.

And the rest? I didn't see it  
But the runt sure knew his trade  
And the popgun worked so rapid  
You'd have almost said it sprayed.

It was done so fast the soldiers  
Hadn't hardly cleared the door  
When he had the sixth and last one  
Neatly piled upon the floor.

Then he turned apologetic  
And he tipped his hat to Flo,  
Says, "I guess I spoiled the party,  
So it's time for me to blow.

"I was studying your gunmen,  
But if *these* are of your best  
I have made the trip for nothing;  
I am sorry I came West.

"They're as clumsy as a copper  
And the way they start is coarse."  
Then he rode across the desert  
On a potted cowboy's horse.

Oh, the East is East, says Kipling  
And the West is West. It's true  
And their methods seem to vary  
In a lot of things they do.

But the real efficient murders  
Aren't native to the West;  
When it comes to fancy killing  
Eastern gunmen are the best.

